

North Hampton  
STP-TE-X-000S(418)  
13501



Environmental Study/  
Categorical Exclusion

May 2007

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## LIST OF EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A: Project location map
- Exhibit B: Project Aerial Photo
- Exhibit C: No Adverse Effect Memo
- Exhibit D: Initial Site Assessment (ISA)
- Exhibit E: Conservation Land Stewardship (CLS) Program memo
- Exhibit F: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) memo
- Exhibit G: Environmental Justice memo
- Exhibit H: NH Natural Heritage Bureau (NHNHB) memo
- Exhibit I: United States Fish and Wildlife Service memo
- Exhibit J: Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM)
- Exhibit K: NH Office of Energy and Planning memo
- Exhibit L: North Hampton Historical Society correspondence
- Exhibit M: Project Plans
- Exhibit N: Photographs

## **Introduction**

This project involves the installation of 4-foot shoulders and minor pavement rehabilitation along NH Route 111 in North Hampton, NH. The project begins at the Hobbs Road/ NH Route 111 intersection and proceeds east approximately 0.5 miles to the NH Route 111/ US Route 1 intersection (*Exhibit A*).

The current roadway has 10-foot to 10.5-foot travel lanes with no paved shoulders. This project was developed at the request of the Town of North Hampton to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians traveling along the roadway. This project will be administered and constructed by New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) District 6 forces.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 USC 4332(2)(c)) as implemented in 23 CFR 771.117(d)(1) this environmental study addresses the reconstruction of NH Route 111 and has been prepared using a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to assess the engineering considerations and environmental effects of this Categorical Exclusion project.

## **Environmental Study**

### **Existing Conditions/Need**

The subject section of NH Route 111 is located within a potentially historic residential neighborhood. The intent of this project is to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians traveling along the roadway with as few impacts to surrounding properties as possible. The lack of paved shoulders forces bicyclists and pedestrians to ride and walk within the vehicle travel lanes and does not provide for safe emergency stopping and vehicle recovery (*Exhibit N*). This section of roadway has been identified by both the Town of North Hampton and local residents as an important scenic recreational corridor which connects downtown areas of Exeter, Hampton and North Hampton with the Atlantic Ocean coastline. Given the importance of this route to the local community, and the safety concerns associated with the current roadway width, an immediate improvement is warranted.

### **Proposed Action**

After evaluation of the alternatives listed under the [Alternatives to the Proposal](#) section, and consideration of the environmental and cultural resources in the project area, the following improvements are being proposed as part of this project:

1. Widen the existing lanes to 11 feet and add 4-foot shoulders within the existing Right-of-Way.
2. Adjust roadside ditches, drainage structures and slopes within the existing right-of-way to accommodate for the proposed roadway widening.

## **Alternatives to the Proposal**

### **“No-Build”**

The “No-Build” alternative is not considered feasible and prudent, as it does not address the deficiencies and safety concerns associated with the existing section of roadway. Selection of this alternative would require bicycles and pedestrians to continue to use the travel way and safety concerns would persist to a point where development of a future project would likely be necessary. Overall, the impacts associated with the proposed action are not of a magnitude to warrant selection of this alternative.

### **Increased Lane and Shoulder Widths**

The proposed action calls for two 11-foot travel lanes with 4-foot shoulders. Several other wider lane and shoulder width options were examined. A maximum width of 12-foot travel lanes with 10-foot shoulders was considered and it was determined that this alternative would substantially increase project costs and public concerns associated with the necessary right-of-way impacts. The proposed action was chosen over this alternative as it provides adequate shoulder width to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians without the need for right-of-way acquisitions.

### **New Location Alternatives**

These alternatives would relocate the NH Route 111 roadway corridor either to the north or south of its current location. Both a north and south alignment would require constructing a new roadway within a residential neighborhood that would likely result in substantial effects to nearby potential historic properties. In addition, both new location alternatives would have far greater impacts to wetlands, conservation properties and recreational facilities. Moreover, these alternatives would substantially increase project costs and the additional property and right-of-way impacts would likely raise serious public concerns.

## **Evaluation of Environmental Effects**

The effects of the project relative to the following social, economic, natural and cultural resources/issues have been reviewed. Resources/issues, which are not discussed in the body of the report, were investigated, however no impacts were evident. As such, these resources/issues are omitted from this environmental documentation. Appropriate exhibits have been attached to the end of the document as necessary. The resources and issues deemed applicable for this project are indicated in **bold/underlined** type.

## Resources/Issues

<u>Social/ Economic</u>	<u>Natural</u>	<u>Cultural</u>
<a href="#">Safety</a>	<a href="#">Water Quality</a>	<a href="#">Historical</a>
<a href="#">Transportation Patterns</a>	<a href="#">NPDES, Stormwater Mgt.</a>	<a href="#">Archaeological</a>
<a href="#">Air Quality</a>	<a href="#">Wetlands</a>	Stonewalls
<a href="#">Noise</a>	Surface Water	Aesthetics
Displacements	Groundwater	
<a href="#">Contaminated Properties</a>	Floodplains	
<a href="#">Neighborhoods</a>	Wildlife	
<a href="#">Business Impacts</a>	Fisheries	
Land Acquisition	Endangered Species	
Land Use	Natural Communities	
Tax Base	Wild & Scenic Rivers	
Recreation	Stream Rechannelization	
Public Lands	NH Designated Rivers	
<a href="#">Construction Impacts</a>	Forest Lands	
	Costal Zone	

Discussions of the effects on resources/issues in [bold](#) follow.

### **Safety/Transportation Patterns/ Community Services**

The current posted speed limit of NH Route 111 within the project limits is 30 mph. This section of roadway handles approximately 5,100 vehicles per day and serves as a connection between the town of Exeter and points to the east including North Hampton, Rye and areas along the seacoast. This residential section of roadway is classified as an urban collector as it distributes traffic from arterial roadways to local streets. Given its urban collector designation this roadway serves as an important link between US Route 1 and neighborhoods to the west for such community services as school busses, emergency response vehicles and town officials. This section of roadway is also listed as a statewide bicycle route and serves as an important recreational facility for local residents and visitors.

The intent of this project is to improve the condition of the roadway as well as to increase bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular safety. Upon completion of the project, traffic patterns are expected to be similar to those which exist today. It is anticipated that through traffic will be maintained throughout construction.

### **Air Quality**

The project is located in a part of the State that is classified as a “Moderate” ozone non-attainment area pursuant to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone. It is included in the “FY 2007-2010

CONFORMITY DETERMINATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS, TRANSPORTATION PLANS, AND REGIONAL EMISSIONS ANALYSIS OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE NONATTAINMENT AREAS,” January 10, 2007. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) has reviewed this report. The conformity determinations were found to be in conformance with the State Implementation Plan and the CAAA and were approved by the USDOT. The project has not been revised since the completion of the conformity analysis.

The area is in attainment with respect to the NAAQS for all other criteria pollutants (CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, VOCs, and PM-10). The proposed work is not considered a “Regionally Significant Project” as defined in the Final Conformity Rules (40 CFR 93.101) or in the rules adopted by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services in accordance with the interagency consultation provisions required by 40 CFR 93.105. When completed, the project will not result in significant air quality impacts or contribute to violations of the NAAQS. Consequently, the project has been determined to be exempt from the requirement that a conformity determination be made.

The proposed action, construction of roadway shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian travel, on essentially the same location with no additional travel lanes or substantial alteration to the existing roadway geometry, will not change traffic patterns or generate additional traffic that would result in changes to vehicular emissions after completion of construction, as such FHWA has determined that this project will generate minimal air quality impacts for CAAA criteria pollutants and has not been linked with any special mobile source air toxics (MSATs) concerns. Consequently, this effort is exempt from analysis for MSATs. When completed, the project will not contribute to violations of the NAAQS and will not have any long-term impacts on air quality.

## **Noise**

Traffic through the project area is relatively light. Completion of this project will not cause a change in existing traffic noise. Construction activities will temporarily increase noise due to the use of heavy equipment, however these noise levels will return to normal after the project has been completed.

## **Contaminated Properties**

An in-house database search of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) One-Stop Environmental Site Information Guide indicated the presence of one (1) remediation site within the project area, located at parcel 6 (*Exhibit D*). This property is listed by NHDES as a registered Underground Injection Control (UIC) site. The location and file information of this site can be found on the attached map and activity lists.

Seven (7) additional sites were found within 1,000 feet of the project area along the US Route 1 corridor (*Exhibit D*). US Route 1 is located down-gradient from the majority of the project area. Many of these sites have also been listed as “Closed” by the NHDES OneStop Database. Although the files listed as closed indicate the potential presence of hazardous materials, the issues associated

with these sites have been examined by NHDES and given their “Closed” status are considered to have been adequately addressed.

The project and the information gathered from NHDES was examined by the Department’s Contamination Program Manager on March 15, 2007. It was determined that given the topography of the location and that the project will not require deep excavation, it is unlikely that the project will encounter hazardous materials. It was recommended that should any visual or olfactory indications of the presence of hazardous materials be encountered during construction, the Bureau of Environment should be contacted immediately and construction in the immediate area discontinued until the situation is assessed and resolved (*Environmental Commitment 5*).

## **Business Impacts**

There is one business, the M. Lords Salon, located along this section of NH Route 111. Traffic on NH Route 111 and access to all properties will be maintained throughout construction. During construction local convenience stores and restaurants may see a short-term increase in patronage due to the presence of on site construction personnel. Upon completion of the project traffic patterns will return to their pre-construction condition and therefore it is not anticipated that any businesses will be adversely impacted by construction.

## **Neighborhoods**

The project is located along a section of NH Route 111 which is primarily residential. This residential section of roadway is classified as an urban collector as it distributes traffic from arterial roadways to local streets. Given its urban collector designation this roadway serves as an important link between US Route 1 and neighborhoods to the west. This section of roadway is also listed as a statewide bicycle route and serves as an important recreational facility for local residents and visitors.

The intent of this project is to improve the condition of the roadway as well as to increase bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular safety. These improvements are anticipated to have a positive effect on the overall function of this residential street as well as the surrounding neighborhoods to which it provides access.

## **Utilities**

The proposed project requires the relocation of aerial utility lines and power poles. Disruption to service, if any, will be kept to an absolute minimum. The following utility companies have been identified within the project area:

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Public Service of NH (Electric)	Aerial

Verizon (Telephone)	Aerial
Comcast (Cable TV)	Aerial
Aquarian Water Company (Potable Water)	Underground
Northern Utilities (Natural Gas)	Underground

## Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, enacted in 1994, requires that an environmental justice evaluation be conducted for all transportation projects that are undertaken, funded or approved by the Federal Highway Administration to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, social and economic effects on minority populations and low income populations. The environmental justice review for the impacted area did not indicate the presence of any of the above noted populations of concern (*Exhibit G*). As such, this project complies with Executive Order 12898.

The environmental justice review for the impacted area did indicate that the project constitutes an alteration in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and therefore must meet the minimum ADA Accessibility Guidelines unless deemed technically infeasible. ADA accessibility will be addressed and incorporated into the design of the project as necessary (*Environmental Commitment 6*). As such, this project complies with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines.

## Water Quality/ Wetlands

To minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation increases in local wetland systems during construction, the contractor responsible for the work will be required, as a contract provision, to prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan detailing the pollution prevention measures which will be employed prior to the commencement of construction activities (*Environmental Commitments 1 and 2*).

Work associated with this project is not expected to involve dredge and fill activities within the jurisdiction of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Wetlands Bureau and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). Should design changes or the contractor's method of construction require work within NH Wetlands Bureau jurisdiction, the appropriate permits from the NH Wetlands Bureau and the US Army Corps of Engineers must be obtained prior to the commencement of construction activities in those areas (*Environmental Commitment 7*).

## Cultural Resources

The Department has consulted with the NH Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to locate and identify National Register of Historic

Places listed, or eligible, properties or districts within the immediate area of the proposed project. The proposed project has been reviewed by the SHPO and FHWA based on the Section 106 review process set forth by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's *Procedures for the Protection of Historic Properties* (36 CFR 800). The proposed design was presented at Monthly Cultural Resource Agency Meetings held on January 11, 2007, March 1, 2007 and April 5, 2007.

Cultural Resource regulations protecting historical resources offer the opportunity to interested persons or groups to become more involved and to become what are known as consulting parties to the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 process. Input was solicited during a combined Public Officials and Public Informational Meeting held for the project on January 22, 2007 and the North Hampton Historical Society requested to be a consulting party to the Section 106 process. The Department has been and will continue to coordinate with the North Hampton Historical Society throughout the preliminary and final design phases of this project.

The project area is located within a residential neighborhood which has been identified by NHDHR as a potential historic district. This potential district contains multiple structures which date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of particular concern to both NHDHR and the North Hampton Historical Society, is the Albert Locke Blacksmith Shop, (Parcel 5) constructed in 1888. Although this structure is located in close proximity to the proposed project, all work will be contained within the existing right-of-way, and therefore is not expected to be negatively affected by the construction of this project. At the January 11, 2007, Cultural Resource Agency Meeting it was agreed by NHDHR and FHWA that, given that all work associated with this project would be located within the existing right-of-way, this project will not have an adverse effect on this potentially historic district. A No Adverse Effect Memo was signed on April 5, 2007 (*Exhibit C*).

In addition to the historic resources noted above, NHDHR determined that given the close proximity of the Albert Locke Blacksmith Shop to the existing right-of-way there is a high potential for archaeological deposits within the proposed work area. As a result of these potential impacts, a limited archaeological investigation will be performed within the right-of-way in the area of the blacksmith shop prior to the commencement of construction (*Environmental Commitment 9*).

In addition to the Albert Locke Blacksmith Shop, the North Hampton Historical Society also identified three (3) additional sites of potential archaeological concern, the Charles Seavey Blacksmith Shop site, the Town Pound site and the John Warner Carriage Shop site. The Charles Seavey Blacksmith Shop is believed to have been located on the Ebert property (Parcel 10). The Town Pound site is believed to have been located on the Simmons Trust property (Parcel 3) on the corner of Hobbs Road and Atlantic Avenue (NH Route 111). The John Warner Carriage Shop site is believed to have been located on the Kirk property (Parcel 6) where the M. Lords Salon is now situated. None of the original structures associated with these sites remain today.

A field review conducted by the Cultural Resource Manager on February 15, 2007 indicated that these sites are located outside the existing right-of-way and appeared to have been disturbed in more recent years. These sites were reviewed by NHDHR at the March 1, 2007 Cultural Resource Agency Meeting and it was determined that the John Warner Carriage Shop site appears to have been disturbed by construction of the M. Lords Salon. Given that the Charles Seavey Blacksmith Shop site

and the Town Pound site are believed to be located in close proximity to the existing right-of-way, a limited archaeological investigation will be conducted within the right-of-way at both of these locations in addition to the Locke Blacksmith Shop area (*Environmental Commitment 9*).

This project will be administered and constructed by NHDOT District 6 forces. In order to ensure that the above noted cultural resources are not inadvertently disturbed during construction NHDOT Bureau of Environment personnel will correspond with and assist NHDOT District 6 in locating and avoiding areas of concern within the project area (*Environmental Commitment 8*).

## Construction Impacts

Construction of this project is anticipated to cause temporary increases in noise and dust levels within the project area. All standard measures will be employed to ensure such increases are minimized to the extent practicable and limited to the construction period (*Environmental Commitment 3*).

It is anticipated that the construction of this project will temporarily disrupt traffic patterns. Access to all occupied residences will be maintained throughout construction. Although traffic might need to run on gravel surfaces for short periods of time, through traffic will be maintained whenever possible or short-term temporary detours with appropriate signage will be implemented during construction (*Environmental Commitment 4*).

To minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation increases in nearby wetland systems during construction, the contractor responsible for the work will be required, as a contract provision, to prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan detailing the pollution prevention measures which will be employed prior to the commencement of construction activities (*Environmental Commitments 1 and 2*).

## Coordination and Public Participation

Letters were sent to various Federal, State and local agencies and groups, as well as the general public, requesting input on this project on the following dates:

<u>Agency / Organization</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Date Sent</u>	<u>Date Received</u>
Town of North Hampton			
Chair, Conservation Commission	Chris Ganotis	1/25/2007	-
Fire Chief	Thomas Lambert	1/25/2007	-
Police Chief	Brian Page	1/25/2007	-
Town Administrator	Michael Pardue	1/25/2007	-
Road Agent	Robert Strout	1/25/2007	-
Recreation Director	Diana Wheeler	1/25/2007	-
Chair, Planning Board	Phil Wilson	1/25/2007	-
Rockingham Region Planning Comm.	Cliff Sinnott	1/25/2007	-
Historical Society	Priscilla Leavitt	1/25/2007	2/7/2007

NH Preservation Alliance	Jennifer Goodman	1/25/2007	-
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Bill Neidermyer	1/25/2007	2/23/2007
NH DRED, LWCF	Shari Colby	1/25/2007	1/30/2007
NH Natural Heritage Bureau	Heather Herrmann	1/16/2007	1/16/2007
NH Office of Energy and Planning	Jennifer Gilbert	1/25/2007	2/1/2007
NH Office of Energy & Planning (CLS)	Steve Walker	1/25/2007	1/29/2007
NH DOT – HR (Environmental Justice)	David Chandler	1/25/2007	3/7/2007

Meetings have periodically been held throughout the development of this project, with various Federal, State and local agencies, as well as with the general public. Project review meetings were held on the following dates:

Date	Topic
January 22, 2007	Public Officials/ Public Informational Meeting
January 11, 2007	Cultural Resource Agency Meeting
March 1, 2007	Cultural Resource Agency Meeting
April 5, 2007	Cultural Resource Agency Meeting

## Summary of Environmental Commitments

The following environmental commitments have been made for this project.

1. Prior to the commencement of work, the department shall submit a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan specific to this project. The plan shall be approved by the Department and implemented and monitored as noted. **(Highway Maintenance & Environment)**
2. Standard pollution prevention measures will be employed to assure all negative impacts are avoided and/or minimized to the maximum extent practicable. **(Highway Maintenance)**
3. Precautions shall be employed to minimize noise and dust levels during the construction period, primarily for the abutting receptors located adjacent to the project area. **(Highway Maintenance)**
4. Although traffic might need to run on gravel surfaces for short periods of time, through traffic will be maintained whenever possible or short-term temporary detours with appropriate signage will be implemented during construction. Access to all occupied properties shall be maintained throughout construction. **(Design & Highway Maintenance)**
5. Several NHDES hazardous waste remediation sites and potentially contaminated sites have been identified within close proximity of the project area. Should any visual or olfactory indications of the presence of hazardous materials be encountered, the Bureau of Environment should be contacted immediately and construction in the immediate area discontinued until the situation is assessed and resolved. **(Highway Maintenance & Environment)**

6. This project constitutes an alteration in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and therefore must meet the minimum ADA Accessibility Guidelines unless deemed technically infeasible. ADA accessibility will be addressed and incorporated into the design of the project as necessary. **(Design & Highway Maintenance)**
7. Work associated with this project is not expected to involve dredge and fill activities within the jurisdiction of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Wetlands Bureau and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). Should design changes or the method of construction require work within NH Wetlands Bureau jurisdiction, the appropriate permits from the NH Wetlands Bureau and the US Army Corps of Engineers must be obtained prior to the commencement of construction activities in those areas. **(Design, Highway Maintenance & Environment)**
8. In order to ensure that the above noted cultural resources are not inadvertently disturbed during construction NHDOT Bureau of Environment personnel will correspond with and assist NHDOT District 6 in locating and avoiding areas of concern within the project area. **(Highway Maintenance & Environment)**
9. A limited archaeological investigation will be performed within the right-of-way in the area of Parcels 3, 5 and 10 prior to the commencement of construction. **(Design, Highway Maintenance & Environment)**